

TEACHER'S GUIDE

SEP/OCT 2009

Guide compiled by Trish Tillman

A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM



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OUR MISSION

We strive for everyone, regardless of age, circumstance, or background, to discover and express the relevance of Shakespeare and the classics in their lives.

- We make boldly imagined and deeply entertaining interpretations of Shakespeare and the classics.
- We provide in-depth, far-reaching artistic learning programs for learners of all ages and circumstances.
- We bring disparate communities together around the creation of new American plays that reflect the cultural diversity of the Bay Area.

OUR FUNDERS AND SPONSORS



The National Endowment for the Arts in cooperation with Arts Midwest presents *Shakespeare for a New Generation*.

California Shakespeare Theater is one of 37 professional theater companies selected to participate in *Shakespeare for a New Generation*, bringing the finest productions of Shakespeare to thousands of middle- and high-school students in communities across the United States. This is the seventh phase of *Shakespeare in American Communities*, the largest tour of Shakespeare in American history.

The National Endowment for the Arts believes a great nation deserves great art. *Shakespeare for a New Generation* exemplifies the Arts Endowment's commitment to artistic excellence, arts education, and public outreach to all Americans.

Artistic Learning programs are underwritten by generous support from The Margaret A. Cargill Foundation, Citigroup Foundation, The Dale Family Fund, The Thomas J. Long Foundation, Koret Foundation, Oakland Fund for the Arts, The San Francisco Foundation, and Yahoo! Employee Fund.

Cal Shakes' 2009 Main Stage season is funded by the corporate sponsors below:

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Additional season underwriting is provided by The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, the Dean & Margaret Leshner Foundation and the Shubert Foundation.

ARTISTIC LEARNING PROGRAMS AT CAL SHAKES

Artistic Learning represents the California Shakespeare Theater's commitment to integrate our artistic and education efforts. The vision of Artistic Learning is to become a leading Bay Area citizen, creating a culture of lifelong learners and nourishing imaginations in preparation for the work of life. Listed below are some of our many programs for youth both in and out of the classroom.

ARTIST RESIDENCIES

To support student achievement and teacher professional development, Cal Shakes brings working artists into the schools to teach with the aim of developing students' creative minds and voices. Collaborations can be based on established school and teacher curriculum (called "arts integration") or can be rooted in theater-related disciplines, such as acting, Shakespeare, or stage combat.

AFTERSCHOOL CLASSES & SUMMER PROGRAMS

Cal Shakes offers a variety of theater programs taught by theater professionals throughout the school year and summer.

Afterschool programs are offered in many aspects of theater including acting, physical comedy, and improvisation.

Cal Shakes hosts three Summer Theater Conservatories in which students study with Cal Shakes professional actors and artists. Limited scholarships are available.

STUDENT DISCOVERY MATINEES (Field trips)

Our well-rounded approach to Student Matinees consists of multiple offerings, including a free Teacher/Student Guide, optional pre- and post-show classroom visits by Teaching Artists, a lively pre-performance engagement at the theater, and a Q&A session with actors immediately following the show. This multipronged approach offers a unique opportunity for students to develop a lasting appreciation of theater and of Shakespeare through dynamic presentation and the experience of a live work of art.

TEACHER'S GUIDES AND STUDENT ACTIVITY GUIDES

This teaching and student activity guide is available for each Shakespeare Main Stage production. It is available free of charge to all classrooms regardless of whether or not a class attends a student matinee.

For more information or to register for any of our programs, please call the Artistic Learning Coordinator at 510.809.3293 or email learn@calshakes.org.

A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM **OVERVIEW**



A NOTE TO TEACHERS

“The first and most important lesson... is that there are no rules about how to do Shakespeare, just clues. Everything is negotiable.”

-Antony Sher and Greg Doran, *Woza Shakespeare!* 1996,
on training in the Royal Shakespeare Company

Welcome! We are thrilled to have you and your students join us for this season’s Student Discovery Matinee production of *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*. Our goal is to engage students with the work on a variety of levels through the live performance and the activities in this Teacher’s Guide.

The theme of this guide is “Lightning in a Bottle: How to Get Your Heart’s Desire in Three Easy Steps.” In *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, all the characters are engaged in a kind of wonder of what is real and what isn’t—first believing one thing and then another, all the while passionately pursuing famously elusive things: family harmony, love, or fame. Shakespeare frequently plays with the idea of opposition in his work—Hamlet muses on the advantages of life versus death, and acting versus inaction, Romeo and Juliet are caught in the forces of love and war, King Lear goes from king to beggar—and the list goes on. Since this is a comedy, all’s well in the end, but the journey is all about experiencing real and powerful human emotions while traveling through the realms of the insubstantial; one might even say, a dream.

The director, Aaron Posner, is not setting the play in a literal landscape of a particular time and place, but is working from the idea that this world exists only in our imagination. The look of the play will be contemporary, but the idea of the power of the fairies and magic is based on ancient myth, and these two sensibilities will come together in as deeply human emotions are felt and played out.

Cue your students to look for how the characters pursue their desires through the strange forest of a midsummer dream, and how they are able to capture their ultimate goal.

Enjoy!



PLOT SUMMARY

A *Midsummer Night's Dream* was written between 1594 and 1598. It has three interlocking plots, all involving marriages. The first is the planned marriage between Duke Theseus and the Amazonian queen, Hippolyta; the second involves a mad scramble between four young lovers who fall in and out of love with each other in the depths of the forest; and the third involves the marriage between Titania and Oberon, two fairies who reside in the forest of Athens.

The play's first scene shows us Hermia, a spirited young woman who refuses to marry Demetrius, the man her father (Egeus) has chosen for her. Egeus calls on Athenian law, which states that a girl must accept her father's choice of a suitor or else face death. Theseus feels sorry for Hermia and gives her another choice—to live forever as a virgin and worship the goddess Diana.

Hermia is not fond of either choice, and decides to elope with her lover, Lysander, to the forest. She tells her friend Helena of the plan that she and Lysander have hatched; and Helena, recently rejected by the man of her dreams, Demetrius, decides to use the information to try to win him back. She reveals to Demetrius Hermia's plans, but the information does not have the effect she plans: Demetrius, closely followed by a lovelorn Helena, pursues Hermia and Lysander into the forest.

Next is the storyline shared by Oberon and Titania, the King and Queen of the fairies in the forest. Titania has refused to give up to Oberon her Indian changeling boy, whom Oberon wishes to have as his henchman. To punish her, Oberon orders the fairy Puck to wipe a love potion from a purple flower on Titania's eyelids while she is sleeping, so that when she wakes, she will fall in love with the first vile creature she sees. The two plots converge when Oberon witnesses Demetrius cruelly insulting Helena, who is still in hot pursuit of him. Oberon orders Puck to wipe the potion on Demetrius' eyes while he sleeps, so that when he opens his eyes he will see Helena and fall in love with her. But Puck makes a mistake, putting the potion on Lysander's eyes instead. When Lysander awakens, he happens to see Helena run by, and falls in love with her! Oberon sees this and commands Puck to put the flower potion on the right young man's eyes. Puck finds Demetrius asleep, puts the love potion on, and sure enough he wakes up just as Helena arrives—pursued by Lysander—and, of course, immediately falls for her as well! Both young men are now in love with Helena, and Hermia can't believe it, since neither young man wanted Helena at all before the night set in. In fact, Helena herself can't believe it and thinks the boys are playing a cruel joke on her by only pretending to be in love. After enjoying the confusion for a while, Oberon orders Puck to undo his mistake, and, once the lovers fall asleep on the forest floor, he reapplies his potion so Lysander falls back in love with Hermia.

Things move from the sublime to the ridiculous when Titania awakens from a sleep in which she has been “treated” to Puck's love potion. She falls in love with an ass! “Ass” is another word for a donkey or a foolish person, and in this case the ass is Bottom, one of the “rude mechanicals” who are busy rehearsing a play they want to perform at Theseus' and Hippolyta's wedding. Puck's mischief has been getting out of control, and he has transformed Bottom's head so that when Titania opens her eyes to the vision of Bottom, she is in love with an ass!

Eventually, however, all the plots untangle and everything works out. Oberon gets the changeling boy he wants and all is well between the fairies. When Theseus and Hippolyta come to the forest for a morning hunt, they awaken the four young lovers. Since Demetrius no longer loves Helena, Theseus overrules Egeus' edict and declares that Lysander should marry Hermia and Demetrius should marry Helena. The lovers decide that they must have been caught in a dream, and, at the wedding feast, they all sit merrily and watch the ridiculous version of the tragedy of *Pyramus and Thisbe* put on by the rude mechanicals.



WHO'S WHO: THE ACTORS & CHARACTERS

CAST



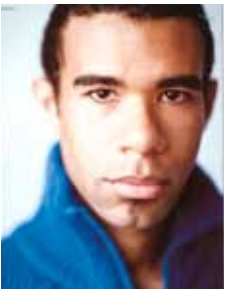
Ted Barker

Starveling: A tailor. He was originally asked to play Thisbe's mother, but is seen in the performance as the role of Moonshine.



Patty Gallagher*

P. T. Quince: A carpenter. She leads the group of mechanicals in their attempt to put on a play for Theseus and Hippolyta's wedding celebrations. She recites the prologue at the beginning of their performance.



Lance Gardner*

Flute: A bellows-mender, or someone who helps to repair leather. He plays the role of Thisbe.



Lindsey Gates*

Helena: Hermia's best friend. She is madly in love with Demetrius, who now loves Hermia. She wishes to be more like her best friend, and tries to attract Demetrius' attention by following him into the forest after Hermia.

*Denotes member of Actors' Equity.



WHO'S WHO: THE ACTORS & CHARACTERS

CAST



Doug Hara*

Puck: Fairy servant to Oberon. He is famous for playing pranks and causing mischief.



Dan Hiatt*

Snout: A tinker, or a metalsmith. He is asked to play the role of Pyramus' father, but plays the Wall in the performance.

Egeus: Hermia's father. He is furious that she does not wish to marry Demetrius and asks that Theseus threaten her with death if she will not obey him.



Pegge Johnson*

Titania: Queen of the Fairies. She refuses to be in the company of her husband Oberon until he will leave the young Indian boy alone with her.

Hippolyta: Queen of the Amazons. She has agreed to be Theseus' bride after he defeated her in battle.



Joan Mankin*

Snug: A joiner. A joiner is a carpenter that does more detailed work without nails and screws. This usually applies when making furniture. She plays the role of the Lion.

Philostrate: The Master of Revels, in charge of all wedding celebrations.

*Denotes member of Actors' Equity.



WHO'S WHO: THE ACTORS & CHARACTERS

CAST



Avery Monsen*

Lysander: In love with Hermia. His belief in the power of love is what leads all of the lovers to travel into the woods.



Danny Schele

Bottom: Asks to play every role in the performance. He makes many claims about his strength as an actor. He plays the role of Pyramus.



Keith Randolph Smith*

Oberon: King of the Fairies. He is currently at odds with Titania, because she has adopted a young Indian boy that he wants as his henchman. This conflict leads to most of the confusion in the woods.

Theseus: The Duke of Athens. He claims to be related to Hercules. Theseus is a character from Greek mythology, made famous for lifting a boulder. This strength may have contributed to his success in conquering the Amazons.



Richard Thieriot*

Demetrius: Although he originally claimed to love Helena, Demetrius quickly fell in love with Hermia after Helena began to reciprocate his feelings. He is well liked by Egeus and feels he has the right to marry Hermia.

*Denotes member of Actors' Equity.



WHO'S WHO: THE ACTORS & CHARACTERS

CAST



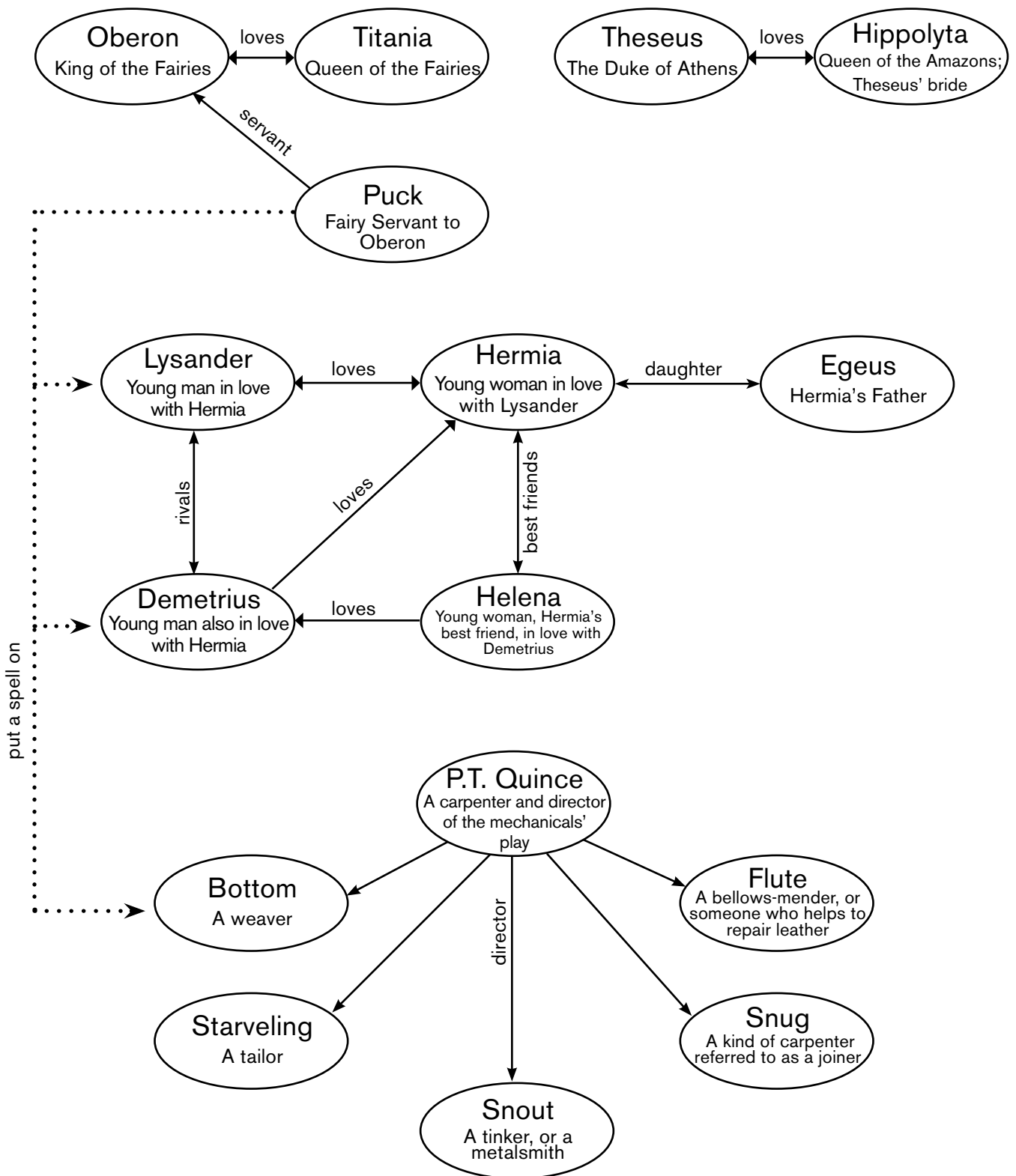
Erin Weaver*

Hermia: She loves Lysander against her father's wishes. Both Lysander and Demetrius are in love with her, but she is determined to elope with Lysander.

*Denotes member of Actors' Equity.



CHARACTER MAP



SEEING THE PLAY: BEFORE AND AFTER

“How now, spirit! Whither wander you?”

-Puck, Act 2, scene 1

Consider the following questions before and after the show.

BEFORE Viewing the Play

What to watch for:

Look for how all three groups of characters intertwine in the story. How are they all getting their hearts' desires?

How does magic help the lovers?

How are the fairies being portrayed?

How is the audience asked to use their imagination to create the world of this play?

Look for moments that you recognize in modern life: Are the characters acting like people would today? Why or why not?

AFTER Viewing the Play

Is Shakespeare trying to say something about how humans behave by using the fairies as he does? Do the fairies represent something about human nature?

What do the mechanicals seem to mean in this play?

Did the setting and costumes of the characters make sense to you?

Which of the characters do you like the best? Why?

Do you believe in fate? Or can people make their own destiny? Explain.

What kind of picture do you think Shakespeare is trying to paint?

Did you recognize any parts of this story from modern movies or books, or your own life?

See the “Write Your Own Critique” page in the Activity Appendix for more ideas about what to watch for, and how to write about your reactions after the show.



SHAKESPEARE'S LANGUAGE

When asked the number one challenge with Shakespeare's works, modern-day audiences will almost always respond: "the language." It's true that the language does sound a bit different to our ears, and Shakespeare uses phrases that we no longer use in our everyday speech. But think of this: There are phrases that we use today that would baffle Shakespeare, should he mysteriously time travel to this day and age. That's because language (especially English) is constantly transforming.

Here are some original quotes from *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Can you match them to their modern-day translations?

For aught that I could ever read,
Could ever hear by tale or history,
The course of true love never did run smooth.
Lysander, Act 1, Scene 1

How now, spirit? Whither wander you?
Puck, Act 2, Scene 1

I'll follow thee and make a heaven of hell,
To die upon the hand I love so well.
Helena, Act 2, Scene 1

Out of this wood do not desire to go.
Thou shalt remain here whether thou wilt or no.
Titania, Act 3, Scene 1

Shall we their fond pageant see?
Lord, what fools these mortals be!
Puck, Act 3, Scene 2

This lanthorn doth the hornèd moon present—
Starveling (Moonshine), Act 5, Scene 1

If we shadows have offended,
Think but this, and all is mended—
That you have but slumbered here
While these visions did appear.
Puck, Act 5, Scene 1

This lantern represents the crescent moon.

Don't bother wishing you could leave this forest, because you're going to stay here whether you want to or not.

In books they say that true love always faces obstacles.

If we actors have offended you, just think of it this way and everything will be all right—you were asleep when you saw these visions, and this silly and pathetic story was no more real than a dream.

Should we watch this ridiculous scene? Lord, what fools these mortals are!

I'll follow you and turn this hell I'm in into a kind of heaven. It would be heavenly to be killed by someone I love so much.

Hello, spirit! Where are you going?

See BRUSH UP YOUR SHAKESPEARE on page 46.



A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM-
LIGHTNING IN A BOTTLE: HOW
TO GET YOUR HEART'S DESIRE
IN THREE EASY STEPS



STEP ONE: TALK TO AN EXPERT

If you're looking for your heart's desire, you've got to know what you're getting into. Seek the advice of experts. Here's what our director, Aaron Posner, had to say about his production of *Midsummer*.

What interests you about this play, and are you setting it in a time and place other than the original?

It will exist in an imaginary landscape, on a stage, in front of any audience. I don't mean that to dismiss the question, but that is where I really love setting these plays. I have seen great productions that make what I think of as The Great Shift. The play is shifted to Vienna in 1848 or to the future on a desert island, or some other time and place. I am more interested in worlds that exist only in our imagination, peopled by very real, very human people. Marianne Moore, in her poem "Poetry" says that poetry requires "Imaginary gardens with real toads in them." That is my favorite description of real, imagination-based theater. All of that said, the look of the production will be largely contemporary, very right now, right here, though the fairy figures are inspired by ancient myth.

How are you envisioning the world of *Midsummer*?

It is a rich and wonderful world of love, magic and hope. There are darker tones and certainly the forces of chaos and disorder rear their heads from time to time, but overall I find the play to be an utter delight, design to delight and amaze. That is what will guide me as I discover the shape of this particular production with the actors. Physically, it will be a very simple production. Nearly a bare stage. I like Shakespeare's stagecraft. He built the plays for very simple stages with some area above, some area below, and something to anchor the action downstage right and downstage left. And maybe a trap or two.

How do you approach a play that is so well known?

You have to make it personal. It cannot be generic or based on well-worn assumptions. You have to be open to being surprised by it. You have to attempt to reimagine it, without falling into the trap of cleverness. I always try to remain vigilant, and ask myself constantly "Is this a good idea? Or just a clever idea? Does it actually illuminate something essential about this play or these people, or is it just new or different or clever for clever's sake?" I have nothing against cleverness. Far from it. I admire it. But I think we owe it to our audiences to be more than just clever. If these plays are not about struggling human beings that we know and recognize and are engaged by, then they are not interesting to me. It should be a ton of fun, but not *just* fun.

What about the fairies? It is a difficult problem for a director to convincingly represent supernatural forces on stage. How are you approaching this?

It is a challenge. Movies made it harder. Disney and now Pixar have made it harder still. It takes creativity. It takes smart designers and very skillful actors. The reality is, we are not interested in fairies or the supernatural per se. We are interested in people. We are fascinated by other human beings. These fairies, like Greek and Roman and Norse Gods, are very, very human. So I am eager to explore the humanity of these fairies, and not worry too much about glitter and makeup and flitting about.



The lovers seem very vulnerable to the forces of the natural world and of their own passions. How are you thinking about representing them and how do they play into your overall vision?

The lovers are just doing their best. They are young and passionate and in love. So of course they act foolish at times. And, like all enthusiasts of any kind, they are vulnerable to all kinds of forces and influences. I love the lovers. They all want so much.

How do you envision the role of the mechanicals (and their play-within-a play) in this world?

I think we will discover the details of this world in the room as we play. I have an incredibly talented group of actors, and I am sure we will find our way. Again, I know it is not about shtick and hi-jinks (though I am sure there will be some of both) but about of aspiring actors whose passion far, far outruns their actual skill. I have no interest in judging them or making fun of them. Like everyone in this play, they are doing their very, very best. The fact that we might not think that is very good is not their fault.

What do you think are the most important themes in the play?

I don't think too much about themes. You could say there are themes of magic or marriage or order out of chaos or the chaos of love, and all of these might be true, but I don't find it a particularly helpful or practical way of thinking about the play. I think about these particular human beings in these particular tricky situations. I think about what each of these odd and flawed and wonderful people want from each other and how they go about getting what they want. I think about how the rules of this particular imaginative world might work.

I think about how I live in relation to the play and the people in it. I want to tell the truth about how the world feels to me. I feel that if I do that with a modicum of creativity, generosity, and courage, and encourage the other artists involved to do the same, than we will find our way. Mostly, I think about what I want the audience to walk away with.

When it comes to themes, I like to let the audience work that out for themselves, if they are interested in doing so. Or the scholars. Or students who have to write about the play.

Is there something about this play that you think might resonate with students who see this production?

All of it, I hope. I think the sensibility of this place is very youth-friendly. Young people are all about love and life-and-death stakes and defying unreasonable adults and trying to find some kind of order out of a world full of chaos. So I think it should be right there for them.



STEP TWO: BE FUNNY

“Lord what fools these mortals be!”

-Puck, Act 3, scene 2

One sure-fire way to get what you want is to charm the socks off people. Make 'em laugh and they're on your side. Here's a handy checklist on how Shakespeare sets out to do that in *Midsummer*.

- Mistaken identities: Puck disguises himself, people fall in love with the wrong person or animal
- Multiple, intertwining plots: plots involving the Mechanicals, the Mortals, and the Fairies
- Suspension of natural laws: magic as a real force in the forest
- Turning things upside down: women pursue men, people live in the forest rather than in civilization, unschooled men and women attempt to perform a play
- The element of marriage: the play culminates in three marriages which provide occasion for celebration and entertainment
- Language: misuse of words or meanings, clever use of insults, complex imagery

OK, you say, but how can you actually BE funny? Here's a bunch of ways and examples that we're calling Our List of Comedy Genres. A genre is a particular way of telling a story. Look for them in our production, and think of how you could use them yourself!

Slapstick/Physical Comedy: The use of the body as a comedic force

In Shakespeare's time: Though Shakespeare did not include stage directions, it is almost certain that he employed physical comedy, particularly with his famous clowns, such as Touchstone, Feste, and Costard. In Shakespeare's time, clowning was influenced by the old Greek clowns, as well as the Italian Commedia Del'Arte movement. Following the departure of his first major clown actor, Will Kempe, Shakespeare began writing different kinds of clowns. He began to create wittier, more cerebral clowns for his new actor, Robert Armin, creating a clown persona that was more idiot savant than buffoon.

In Modern Times: Charlie Chaplin redefined the use of the body for comedy in the 1920s, and modern comedians such as Jim Carrey, Tyler Perry, Jack Black and Jackie Chan have kept the movement alive and on our television screens.



Character Comedy: The use of a well-known or established character to create comedy

In Shakespeare's time: Though Shakespeare often used historical figures in his plays, they were relegated to the History plays, and not used for comedic value. The greatest example of character comedy in Shakespeare's folio is his use of Falstaff, a character he created to be a clown in *Henry V*. However, the bumbling, vainglorious Falstaff was so popular, that Queen Elizabeth I commissioned Shakespeare to write a play in which Falstaff fell in love. The play born from this commission, *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, relies heavily on Falstaff to create and maintain the comedic atmosphere.

In Modern Times: Modern examples of character-driven comedy are Sacha Baron Cohen in *Borat*, Stephen Colbert in *The Colbert Report*, and stand-up comics such as Larry the Cable Guy and Sarah Silverman.

Wit/Wordplay Comedy: The use of words and banter to create comedy

In Shakespeare's time: Shakespeare was the master of witty back-and-forth, using wordplay and battles of wits in many of his plays, notably between Kate and Petruchio in *The Taming of the Shrew*, Berowne and Rosalind in *Love's Labour's Lost*, and Beatrice and Benedick in *Much Ado About Nothing*. A good example from *Midsummer* occurs in Act 2, Scene 2, when Lysander attempts to coax Hermia into sleeping together on the ground rather than apart:

HERMIA

Be it so, Lysander: find you out a bed;
For I upon this bank will rest my head.

LYSANDER

One turf shall serve as pillow for us both;
One heart, one bed, two bosoms and one troth.

HERMIA

Nay, good Lysander; for my sake, my dear,
Lie further off yet, do not **lie** so near.

LYSANDER

O, take the sense, sweet, of my innocence!
Love takes the meaning in love's conference.
I mean, that my heart unto yours is knit
So that but one heart we can make of it...
Then by your side no bed-room me deny;
For **lying** so, Hermia, I do not **lie**.

HERMIA

Lysander riddles very prettily.
Now much beshrew my manners and my pride,
If Hermia meant to say Lysander **lied**.
But, gentle friend, for love and courtesy
Lie further off; in human modesty.

In Modern Times: An excellent example of modern wordplay is Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, which turns many puns and phrases on their heads. In it, Alice mistakes a tale for a tail and debates whether time can physically "fly." Another example of wordplay in children's literature is *The Phantom Tollbooth*, which features a bee that spells (a "Spelling Bee") and two sisters named Rhyme and Reason.



Insult Comedy: The use of insults—often one-liners—at the expense of another character to create comedy

In Shakespeare's time: The art of the perfect insult had been attempted long before Shakespeare's time. The Latin poet Martial (41-104 AD), who wrote cheerful, cutting epigrams about the scandals of his acquaintances, is considered to be the first "insult comic." Shakespeare used insult comedy in a particularly inventive and outrageous way. Here are a few of his best insults:

"You are as a candle, the better burnt out."

"There's no more faith in thee than in a stewed prune."

"That trunk of humours, that bolting-hutch of beastliness, that swollen parcel of dropsies, that huge bombard of sack, that stuffed cloak-bag of guts, that roasted Manningtree ox with pudding in his belly, that reverend vice, that grey Iniquity, that father ruffian, that vanity in years?"

And in *Midsummer*, Lysander mockingly refers to Hermia's short stature:

"Get you gone, you dwarf,
You minimus of hind'ring knotgrass made,
You bead, you acorn..."

In Modern Times: Insult stand-up comics have become more popular in recent years. One strain of this genre is the "audience insulter," whose entire set is based around improvisational insulting and ridiculing of specific audience members. Some well-known modern insult comics include Lisa Lampinelli, Don Rickles, and Triumph, the Insult Comic Dog.

Farce: Comedy created by the fast-paced use of broad satire, with exaggerated characters trying to get out of improbable situations.

In Shakespeare's time: The "mechanicals", led by Nick Bottom, take the rehearsal and performance of their play quite seriously. The "mortals," Helena, Hermia, Lysander, and Demetrius are terribly self-absorbed and too serious about their own feelings: e.g., Helena is anxious about her looks, reacting awkwardly when Lysander calls her "fair"; Hermia is very defensive about being shorter than Helena, etc.

In Modern Times: Farce continues to be a popular form today. Some contemporary examples include Will Farrell in *Blades of Glory*, The Three Stooges, *Monty Python and the Holy Grail*, and Sacha Baron Cohen in *Borat*.



STEP THREE: ADD THE MAGIC

“Lord what fools these mortals be!”

–Puck, Act 3, scene 2

Sometimes we can't do it all alone—every goal needs a little magic to make things turn out right. Shakespeare uses the idea of fairies in the play to help the mortals along. We all could use a little supernatural intervention from time to time!

Shakespeare's fairies emerged out of a rich tradition of supernatural creatures. Many Elizabethans still believed that there were spirits in the world to be feared. The names of these creatures, including “Puck” and “Robin Goodfellow,” were also names for the devil. Their stories were folk tales of humans being led astray into humiliation or death. They acted as cautionary tales to warn of the dangers of carelessness. As most looked human, a collection of rituals and traditions had evolved to identify fairies and protect oneself from these malevolent beings.

With his plays Shakespeare changed the way the world viewed fairies. His fairies owe as much to courtly Italian romances as to the traditional spirits. Unlike the solitary fiends of lore who lived from moment to moment, his fairies are structured in a court system with a king and queen. Plays like *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *The Tempest* show fairies that invest in mortals and take sides in non-spirit world politics. Like the mortals, their actions are based in a sense of justice and their own emotions and desires. Fairies are still tricksters, but no longer intend harm to humans. Instead they are celebratory and deeply tied to nature through song and dance. They also demonstrate good will towards humans: Titania cares for the Indian boy out of love for her priestess, and Oberon orders Puck to resolve the Athenians' love situation without any kind of reward. Both rulers even bless the bridal beds at the end of the play. This beneficence is a far cry from the fear-inspiring fairies to which Shakespeare's Elizabethan audiences were accustomed. Shakespeare even changed their physical appearance—in his works fairies are tiny and incredibly swift. Without Shakespeare's influence, many of the fairies we know of today probably wouldn't exist. We can see his legacy in the kindness of Cinderella's fairy godmother, the size of Peter Pan's Tinkerbell, or the help of the tooth fairy.

Do You Know About Changelings?

In *A Midsummer Night's Dream* Oberon and Titania are at odds over a changeling boy Titania has taken. Tradition said that fairies sometimes kidnapped human babies and exchanged them with fairy babies. These were called changelings. The fairy babies would grow up in the mortal world and be revealed by abnormalities. This was sometimes used to explain developmental differences in children.





THE PUCK PAGE

“I am that merry wanderer of the night!”

—Puck, Act 2, scene 1

If you are interested in the myth and folklore of fairies, here are more tidbits on how Puck and his kin have been seen and described throughout history.

Prior to Shakespeare, who may have been influenced by the Welsh *Pwca*, Puck and Robin Goodfellow were considered separate creatures. Now they are considered the same creature. Parallel words exist in many ancient languages—*puca* in Old English, *puki* in Old Norse, *puke* in Swedish, *puge* in Danish, *puks* in Low German, *pukis* in Latvia and Lithuania—mostly with the original meaning of a demon, devil or evil and malignant spirit... Because of this similarity, it is uncertain whether the original *puca* sprang from the imaginative minds of the Scandinavians, the Germans or the Irish.

—Gillian Edwards, *Hobgoblin and Sweet Puck* p.143

Puck used his shape-shifting to make mischief. For example, the *Phouka* (Ireland) would turn into a horse and lead people on a wild ride, sometimes dumping them in water. The Welsh *Pwca* would lead travels with a lantern and then blow it out when they were at the edge of a cliff.

—<http://www.boldoutlaw.com/puckrobin/puck.html>



ELIZABETHAN CULTURE OVERVIEW



WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE: A MYSTERIOUS LIFE

William Shakespeare is considered one of the world's finest playwrights of all time. Writing in England during the late 1500s during the reigns of Queen Elizabeth I and King James I, he established himself as a major poet, actor and playwright. He mastered the comic and tragic dramatic forms and introduced over 2,000 new vocabulary words into the English language. Shakespeare is read by nearly every American student and is perhaps best known for *Romeo and Juliet*, *Hamlet*, and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.

However, Shakespeare's life is a constant source of debate and question in the scholarly community. Many records of the time that might have tracked his life or given more clues to how, when, and why he wrote the plays that he did have been lost, if they even existed at all. Here are some of the more interesting things we actually know about his life.

- Shakespeare was born under the old Julian calendar, not the current Gregorian calendar that was created in 1582 and adopted in England in 1751. What was April 23 during Shakespeare's life would be May 3 on today's calendar.
- Shakespeare is listed as an actor on documents from 1592, 1598, 1603, and 1608. It is supposed that he played mostly unassuming parts, such as the ghost in *Hamlet*, to allow him more time to write.
- On June 29, 1613, the Globe Theatre went up in flames during a performance of *Henry the Eighth*. A theatrical cannon, set off during the performance, misfired, igniting the wooden beams and thatching. According to one of the few surviving documents of the event, no one was hurt except a man whose burning breeches were put out with a bottle of ale. It was rebuilt in the following year.
- Countless excellent phrases, now commonly used, occur first in Shakespeare, including one fell swoop, vanish into thin air, play fast and loose, be in a pickle, foul play, tower of strength, flesh and blood, be cruel to be kind, and with bated breath. According to the *Oxford Dictionary of Quotations*, Shakespeare wrote about one-tenth of the most quotable quotations ever written or spoken in English.
- Shakespeare's son, Hamnet, died in 1596. His daughter Susanna died in 1649. His younger daughter Judith had three children, but all died before their mother and without children. His granddaughter Elizabeth, daughter of Susanna, died childless in 1670, ending the William Shakespeare line.
- Shakespeare was buried in the Holy Trinity Church, Stratford-upon-Avon. He supposedly put a curse on anyone daring to move his body from that final resting place. Though it was customary to dig up the bones from previous graves to make room for others, Shakespeare's remains are still undisturbed.



GO GIRLS!

**“I do entreat your grace to pardon me.
I know not by what power I am made bold....
But I beseech your grace that I may know
The worst that may befall me in this case
If I refuse to marry Demetrius.”**

—Hermia, Act 1, scene 1

One of the comedic tools listed earlier was turning the social order upside down. In *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, men expect to take the lead in most areas of social decision-making. It is Egeus who invokes the Athenian law that will condemn his daughter to death if she doesn't obey him; Theseus who prescribes for her another (very limited) “choice”; Theseus who has defeated Hippolyta at war and been granted her hand in marriage; and Demetrius and Lysander who radically change their affections under the spell of the love potion. It is men, in other words, who own all the choices. But women make their choices in this play! Helena, Hermia, and Titania display the inventiveness that makes change possible. Hermia refuses to obey Athenian law; Helena hatches the plot by which to “win” Demetrius; and Titania is steadfast on resisting the control that Oberon insists upon.

Queen Elizabeth defied all expectations of her age. She never married because she realized early that marriage meant loss of power. Even though the general opinion of the time was that women's minds were weak and that a female head of state was “an offense against nature,” she ruled with great political skill and cunning

In Shakespeare's time, the decision to marry was in the hands of a girl's father. A father chose a daughter's husband and it was considered dishonorable and disrespectful to communicate her desires in the process. When a woman married, all of her personal property became the property of her husband and she had no say in how it was spent. Women were regarded as chattel (property) to be married to improve the family fortune or political alliances. Elizabethans thought women needed a male caretaker (remember, females could not have careers). However, Shakespeare lived during the time of the Renaissance, which was a turbulent and exciting period of history in which many old and accepted ideas were being questioned, examined, and re-interpreted, and one of these was the idea of romantic love versus family obligation, and this sets the play in motion right from the start.



RESOURCES



A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM ON FILM

A Midsummer Night's Dream is a popular play on stage, and even more popular on film. Over 22 film versions exist that are directly named after the play; there are many more which employ vastly different interpretations or are simply inspired by the story. Many of these films update the play to a modern setting. Here's a snapshot of the variety:

A Midsummer Night's Dream (1909)

Director: Charles Kent

Starring: Charles Chaplin

A silent short film based on the classic.

A Midsummer Night's Dream (1935)

Directors: William Dieterle and Max Reinhardt

Starring: James Cagney and Mickey Rooney

A black-and-white film set in traditional Renaissance times.

A Midsummer Night's Dream (1967)

Directors: George Balanchine and Dan Eriksen

A filmed ballet focusing on the characters of the lovers and the fairies.

A Midsummer Night's Dream (1999)

Director: Michael Hoffman

Starring: Kevin Kline, Michelle Pfeiffer, Stanley Tucci, Rupert Everett, Calista Flockhart, and Christian Bale

A 20th-century interpretation using Shakespeare's language.

Get Over It (2001)

Director: Tommy O'Haver

Starring: Kirsten Dunst, Sisqo, Martin Short, and Carmen Electra

Set in high school; in addition to some similarities in plot, there is a subplot involving the main characters acting in a musical production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.

A Midsummer Night's Rave (2002)

Director: Gil Cates, Jr.

Puck is a drug dealer, the magic flower called "love-in-idleness" is replaced with magic ecstasy, and the King and Queen of Fairies are the host of the rave and the DJ.



BOOKS AND INTERNET

General Shakespeare Reference Pages and Lesson Plans:

www.folger.edu

www.pbs.org/shakespeare/educators/

<http://www.teachit.co.uk/armoore/shakespeare>

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/drama/shakespeare>

Tudor and Elizabethan Times: <http://www.snaithprimary.eril.net/ttss.htm>

Life in Elizabethan England: <http://renaissance.dm.net/compendium/>

Shakespeare Resource Center - Elizabethan England: <http://www.bardweb.net/england.html>

Shakespeare and Elementary Students: <http://www.pbs.org/shakespeare/educators//elementary>

Shakespeare and Hip Hop: <http://artsedge.kennedy-center.org/content/3656/>

Public service announcement vs. violence lesson: <http://www.edutopia.org/pdfs/PA-ti-lessons/edutopia-romeo-and-juliet-psa.pdf>

Shakespearean Insults: http://gallery.carnegiefoundation.org/collections/quest/collections/sites/divans-hutchinson_yvonne1/yvonne%20scans/insultsheet.pdf

Books:

Davis, James E., ed. *Teaching Shakespeare Today: Practical Approaches and Productive Strategies*. Urbana, Ill: National Council of Teachers of English, 1993.

Crystal, David, and Crystal, Ben. *The Shakespeare Miscellany*. The Overlook Press, Peter Mayer Publishers, Inc. Woodstock and New York, 2005.

Crystal, David, and Crystal, Ben. *Shakespeare's Words: A Glossary and Language Companion*. Penguin Books, The Penguin Group. London, 2002.

Papp, Joseph and Elizabeth Kirkland. *Shakespeare Alive!* New York, New York: Bantam Books, 1988.
Epstein, Norrie. *The Friendly Shakespeare: A Thoroughly Painless Guide to the Best of the Bard*. New York, New York: Penguin Books, 1993

Asimov, Isaac. *Asimov's Guide to Shakespeare*. New York, New York: Random House, 1970.

Bender, Michael. *All the World's a Stage: a Pop-Up Biography of William Shakespeare*. San Francisco: Chronicle Books, 1999.

Foster, Cass and Lynn G. Johnson. *Shakespeare: To Teach or Not to Teach*. Grades 3 and Up. Scottsdale, AZ: Five Star Publications, 1992.

Garfield, Leon. *Shakespeare Stories*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1998.

Morley, Jacqueline and John James. *Shakespeare's Theatre: the Inside Story*. East Sussex, London: Simon and Schuster Young Books, 1994.



CLASSROOM ACTIVITY GUIDE

Sept/Oct 2009

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Artistic Director

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Managing Director

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A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM

NOTE TO TEACHERS: This guide was created as a supplement for teachers preparing students to see California Shakespeare Theater's production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Worksheets are designed to be used individually or in conjunction with others throughout the guide. While we realize that no aspect of this guide fully outlines a course for meeting all subject area standards, discussion questions and topics are devised to address certain aspects of California state standards. The activities here can be minimally reproduced for educational, nonprofit use only. All lessons must be appropriately credited.

There are many excellent *A Midsummer Night's Dream* lesson plans on the internet. The Folger Library site at www.folger.edu and the Web English Teacher site at www.webenglishteacher.com/, are particularly good. This guide concentrates primarily on ideas that help students understand language, plot and character and activities to get students on their feet and speaking.

If you are interested in a California Shakespeare Theater Professional Development Workshop, which provides easy-to-learn tools for teachers to incorporate theater and arts education activities into California standards-based core curriculum to enhance student's learning, please contact the Artistic Learning Administration Manager at 510.548.3422 x105 or sfryer@calshakes.org.

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We strive for everyone, regardless of age, circumstance, or background, to discover and express the relevance of Shakespeare and the classics in their lives.

- We make boldly imagined and deeply entertaining interpretations of Shakespeare and the classics.
- We provide in-depth, far-reaching artistic learning programs for learners of all ages and circumstances.
- We bring disparate communities together around the creation of new American plays that reflect the cultural diversity of the Bay Area.

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SOCIAL NETWORKING CHARACTER STUDY

Overview: Being able to empathize with fictional characters sheds light on our own personal situations, and recasts the plot of the play in relevant terms.

Grade: 6-12

Goal: To bring the characters of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* into a real-world context.

State Standards: English Literary Response and Analysis 3.0-3.4

Outcomes: Students will be able to use basic facts from the text to imaginatively enter into the thoughts, feelings, and motivations of fictional characters by creating a mock Facebook page.

Activity: Familiarize students with the profile layout of a social networking site page, such as Facebook. See following examples.

1. Ask the students to fill in the profile with:
 - a. vital statistics
 - b. likes and dislikes
 - c. friends

Note: Students should use information drawn from their knowledge of the play (for example, Puck loves to play tricks on people), filled out by their imaginations (for example, when Puck was little, a favorite trick was turning over children's milk glasses and watching the milk run all over the floor).

2. Profile photos may be drawn or cut out from magazines, or an actual photo of the student could be used and attached to the page. Remember, many actual Facebook profile pages do not have an actual photo of the person who made them—students sometimes choose a picture of something they feel represents them—a tree, a poster they like, etc.
3. Share the pages you have created in student pairs or in a group discussion.

Reflection:

- Name one thing you had to imagine about your character that you think is really interesting.
- Was it easy to imagine beyond the play—for instance, what Hermia's activities and interests might be? Or do you feel the play did not provide enough information? How so?
- How easy was it to decide who your character's friends are? Would your character ignore a friend request from other characters in the play? Why or why not?

Extension exercise in writing dialogue:

Beyond the basic profile information, a further way to extend the activity is to have the students write on each other's profile "walls". A wall is the area on a profile page where friends can write short messages to each other that are posted directly on the page for others to view.

Note: Require the students to fill out the worksheet manually, rather than actually fill out a public profile online. If you can post the mock profile page that follows onto your school or school blog website for students to fill out online within the framework of this project, that would work as well, but false profiles in a public space should be actively discouraged. Student examples should show a deep understanding of the plot and qualities of the character. Some examples follow.

shakesbook midsummer



Helena

D *still* doesn't know I exist!!

Updated: 400 years ago

Networks: Athens, Magical Forest Outside Athens
Sex: Female
Relationship status: Single
Religious views: Demetrius is God

Friends



Hermia



Lysander

Information

Contact info:

Email: DemetriusLuvr4Ever@athens.nobility.net
Current town: Athens, Greece

Personal Info

Interests: Demetrius

Activities: Talking to Demetrius, writing Demetrius love letters, following Demetrius, attempting to break into Demetrius' house, stealing Demetrius' socks, going through Demetrius' garbage, origami

Favorite music: Demetrius singing in the shower, Demetrius yelling at me to get out of his bathroom

Favorite quote: "So we grow together,
Like to a double cherry, seeming parted,
But yet an union in partition;
Two lovely berries moulded on one stem"
--Hermia, my BFF

Wall



Hermia:

My dad is being soooo stupid! He's being SUCH a jerk about the whole marriage thing. Me and Lysander are eloping in the forest, ttyl!



Demetrius:

Helena, please stop poking me. It's just sad.

TWEETS FROM BOTTOM AND DEMETRIUS

Twitter is a social networking and micro-blogging service that enables its users to send and read other users' updates known as tweets. Tweets are text-based posts of up to 140 characters in length. Updates are displayed on the user's profile page and delivered to other users who have signed up to receive them.

Have students create a Twitter feed as if they followed a certain character. What would the character relate as they moved through the events of the story?

Bottom: Getting roles for Duke's show. Hope it's a great one...

Demetrius: has to go into the woods and get what's his.

Bottom: Emotionally preparing for the role of Pyramus. Ugh, there were so many roles I should have played.

Demetrius: is being followed. WHAT A SURPRISE!

Bottom: seems to be the only one who sees problems with this script. We must protect the ladies...

Bottom: Just woke up and everything is better than ever...

Demetrius: sees everything differently.

Demetrius: Not again! About to handle this situation with Lysander.

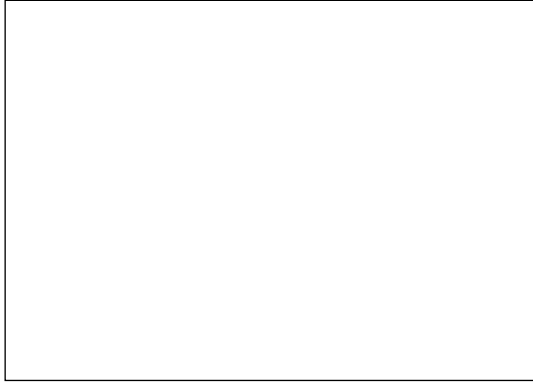
Demetrius: GIRL FIGHT!!!!!!

Bottom: Had the craziest dream. Read my blog later...

Demetrius: has never been this confused, but wants nothing but Helena.

Bottom: IT'S SHOWTIME!

Demetrius: watching the dumbest show ever...



is _____

Networks:

Sex:

Relationship status:

Political views:

Religious views:

▼ Friends

▼ Information

Contact info:

Email:

Current town:

Personal Info

Activities:

Interests:

Favorite music:

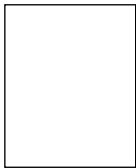
Favorite TV shows:

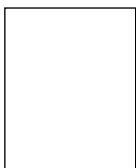
Favorite movies:

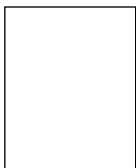
Favorite books:

Favorite _____:

▼ Wall







COMIC BOOK

Overview: Creating comic books is an ideal way to help ELL students visualize the language, increase literacy, and get all students engaged with Shakespeare's words.

Grade: 5-12

Goal: Students will be able to visualize the dramatic situations from the play, realizing the relationships between the characters and the high stakes of each moment.

State Standards: English Literary Response & Analysis §3; Visual Arts Creative Expression §2.

Outcomes: Students will be able to demonstrate discriminatory thinking in their choice of scenes, and translate the dramatic moments of Shakespeare's play into the medium of the dramatic elements of the familiar comic.

Materials: If you are using technology to achieve this project, you will first need a digital camera. Software to manipulate the photo into the cartoon style is available over the internet. The exercise below is written using Photoshop. See Technology notes below.

If you wish to achieve this without using a computer, have clean white paper of a standard size and many colors and textures of markers available.

Activity: Students should be familiar with the story.

What to do:

1. Have students decide on the key scenes in the story and list them in order. If you have done tableaux with your students, they can use those scenes and add to them so there are enough scenes to create a comic book of the whole story.
2. Assign each group of students a "scene" to turn into one page of the comic book.
3. Students should highlight the one or two line(s) from the original text that best illustrate that scene.
4. Students paraphrase Shakespeare's words into their own language.
5. Have students "pose" each scene as a tableau.
6. Take a digital photograph of the pose. Using the Photoshop filter, transform the scene to comic book style.
7. Add "speech" bubbles and fill bubbles with the relevant line(s) of Shakespeare's text.
8. Assemble all the pages into one comic book.
9. Add a Title Page.

Technology Notes: Photoshop is the software program most readily available to create the comic book effect.

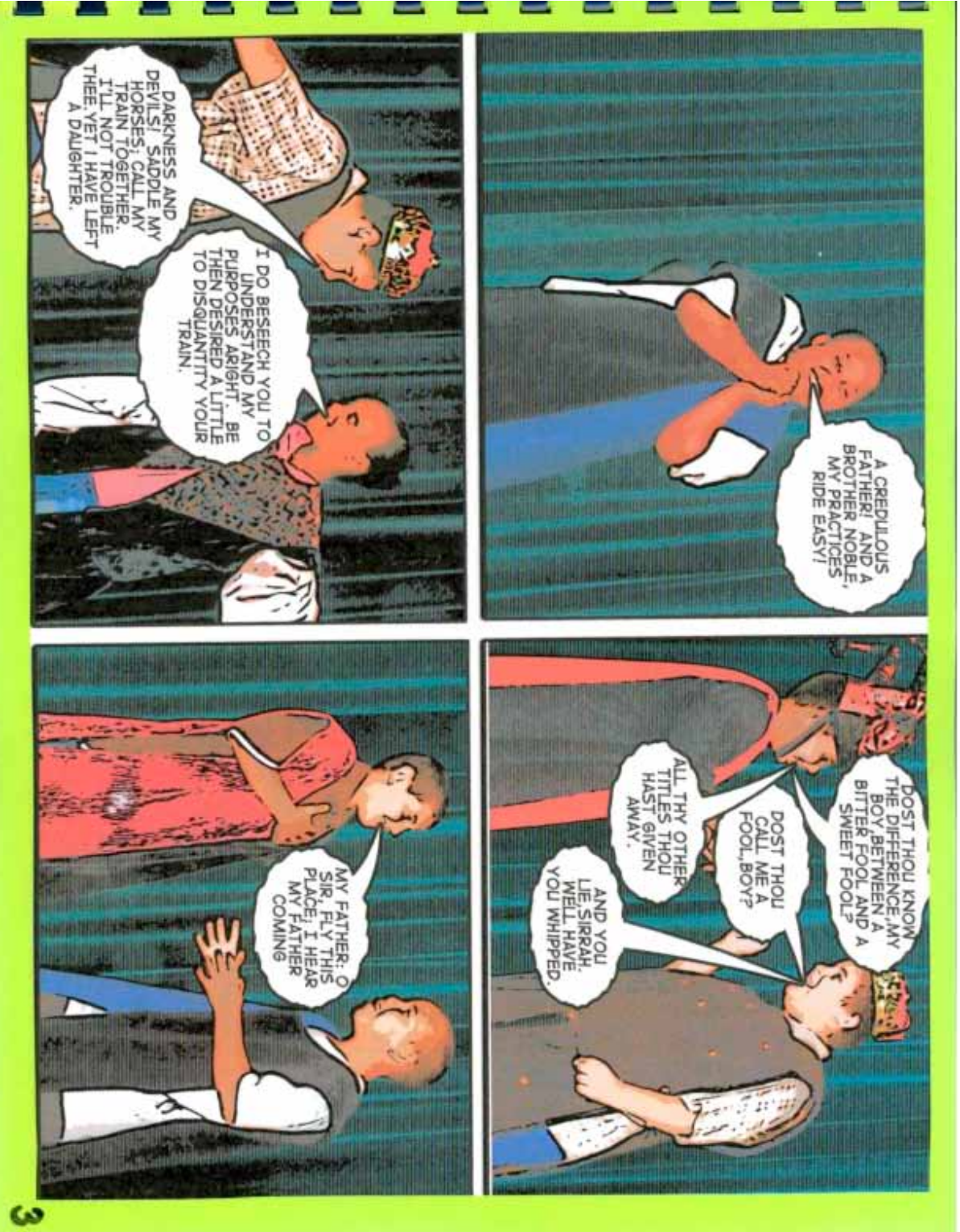
Note: Comic Life for the Mac is also quite easy to download and use at www.plasq.com. A look around the internet will be able to lead you to many other programs for PC as well.

Coaching: You don't have to do the comic book all at once. The whole class can work together on one page a day.

If your students don't have access to a digital camera and Photoshop, have students draw the scene on standard sized paper. Show samples of different comic book styles (Disney/Superhero/Manga/Anime, etc.) and have students vote on one "style" to use for all the drawings so that the finished book has continuity).

Reflection: Ask student audience to evaluate the "pose" and make suggestions to improve it. The scene should clearly indicate the emotions of the characters and convey the context and main idea of the text.

COMIC BOOK



3

Comic book of King Lear performed and produced by Claire Stoermer's fifth-grade class at Fruitvale Elementary School, Oakland, CA.

MUSICAL INTERLUDE: THE PLOT OF THE PLAY THROUGH POP CULTURE

(Page 1 of 2)

Overview: Write the story of a Shakespeare play through song titles.

Grade: 6-12

Goal: To use contextual clues to relate the Shakespeare text and current songs.

State Standards: English Writing Applications §2; Theater Arts §1

Outcomes: Students will research the play for clues to the characters, fully describe the arc of the play through modern lyrics and mood of the music played, and engage critical thinking skills to determine their choices.

Activity:

1. Students will research current music to find connections of meaning through lyrics and musical expression to the plot of the play
2. Students will create a list of song that accurately describes the arc of the plot of the play, paying attention to particular words and moods that connect the song and the original text.
3. Have students share their lists, playing a few selections in class as time permits.

Reflection:

- What difficulty did you have finding the right songs, if any?
- Were certain points of the play harder than others for which to find a current expression?
- Does your soundtrack point to a certain interpretation of the story as you see it?
- Were there certain characters you chose to highlight? Why?

See example from *Romeo and Juliet* on the next page.

MUSICAL INTERLUDE

(Page 2 of 2)

By Daniel Moattar, from Urban High School,
Cathleen Sheehan's English class, April 2009

- Act I:** 1. Unnecessary Trouble (Hard-Fi, *Stars of CCTV*)
2. Older Guys (Teenage Fanclub, *Thirteen*)
3. The Wrong Girl (Belle and Sebastian, *Fold Your Hands Child You Walk Like a Peasant*)
4. Fresh Feeling (Eels, *Souljacker*)
- Act II:** 5. Does He Love You? (Rilo Kiley, *More Adventurous*)
6. Hesitating Beauty (Billy Bragg & Wilco, *Mermaid Avenue*)
7. Marry Me (St. Vincent, *Marry Me*)
- Act III:** 8. Sugar Assault Me Now (Pop Levi, *The Return to Form Black Magick Party*)
9. The Payback (James Brown, *Lock Stock and Two Smoking Barrels OST*)
- Act IV:** 10. Vengeance Is Sleeping (Neko Case, *Middle Cyclone*)
11. I Love You Always Forever (Donna Lewis, *Now in a Minute*)
- Act V:** 12. We Will Not Grow Old (Lenka, *Lenka*)
13. Brand New Colony (The Postal Service, *Give Up*)
14. Arms Tonite (Mother Mother, *O My Heart*)
15. O My Heart (Mother Mother, *O My Heart*)
16. How to Fight Loneliness (Wilco, *Summerteeth*)
17. Adventures in Solitude (The New Pornographers, *Challengers*)
18. The Ghost of You Lingers (Spoon, *Ga Ga Ga Ga Ga*)
19. Heaven Knows I'm Miserable Now (The Smiths, *Hatful of Hollow*)
20. Bad Day (Daniel Powter, *Daniel Powter*)

The End.

CHARACTER BACKSTORY: WHAT MAKES A PERSONALITY?

Overview: Write the backstory for one of the minor characters in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*: Starveling, Flute, Hippolyta, Egeus, or Philostrate.

A “backstory” is the personal history of a character that is not described in the actual play or story. In other words, it is what happens to the character before the play starts.

Grade: 4-12

Goal: To use contextual clues to create an imaginative experience of a minor character.

State Standards: : English Writing Applications §2; Theater Arts §1 Identify character’s objective and motivations to explain the character’s behavior.

Outcomes: Students will research the play for clues to the characters, and fully describe an imagined life previous to the play’s beginning that justifies the way the character acts in the play.

Activity: Explain to the students that the interior life of the character is something an actor must be able to imagine as they start to understand how to play that character. The life of a minor character has been a popular literary and theatrical exercise and can illuminate the main story even more brightly. For instance, *Wicked* is a very popular book-turned-Broadway musical that explores the backstory and unseen lives of the witches of Oz.

1. Create Word Bank: Create a word bank as a class on the board about a particular character from the book. Use descriptive concrete sensory details (sight, smell, touch, taste, and hearing). Guide students through describing how the character looks, how s/he acts (personality), and what we already know about him/her from the book.

2. Write Summary— Prep for writing Backstory: Students choose a character from the reading, and using descriptive words, write a one-page description using words like those in the word bank. Include when possible:

- Timeline of significant events in the character’s life
- Physical description
- Personality traits
- Also answer the following questions about the character:
 - Where and when does s/he live?
 - What does s/he want more than anything?
 - Who or what is standing in the way of what s/he wants?
 - What is in his/her pockets?
 - What is your character afraid of?
 - Who are his/her friends?
 - What makes him/her happy?
 - What does s/he think about when s/he is alone?
 - How does s/he react to stressful situations?
 - What is s/he most proud of in his/her life?
 - What does s/he do for fun?
 - Who has helped him/her?

3. Group Work: Divide students into groups of four or five. Students in each group read their descriptions to each other. Pick one to share with the class and add others if there is time.

4. Theatrical Presentation: Each group should pick one of those stories to present to classmates in an artistic way. They can choose how to present it. Possibilities include: a rap, comic strip drawings, tableau, puppet show, etc.

Coaching: Tell the students that this requires them to use their imagination! Think of what the character does in the play and imagine reasons why the character ends up doing what he/she does. Remember, there is no “right” answer to an open-ended exercise, as long as they can justify their choices using the text. This exercise is specifically designed to explore the life of minor characters in the play—characters that are often overlooked, but can yield fascinating discoveries. Actors, even when playing a smaller role, must do this same kind of research to be able to make that character believable onstage.

Rubric for the backstory:

- Be creative.
- Describe the setting (when and where the backstory takes place).
- Describe the character in vivid detail as s/he was early in life—personality, looks, situation, who s/he is friends with, what his or her interests are, how s/he looks or talks, etc.
- Use action words, descriptive words, dialogue, and images.
- Be based on clues from the main story when possible.
- Describe a problem that the character faces and why it is a problem (“I’m so in love with this person; why don’t they love me back? I’d do anything for them!” —Helena).
- Describe specifically why s/he chooses to do those things (for example, personal satisfaction, revenge, habit, being forced to do them by someone else, etc.).
- Describe how the character feels about doing what s/he does in the play.

Reflection:

- What did you learn about your character that you didn’t know before?
- What did you especially like about one of the descriptions you heard today?
- Did you see a picture of the character in your head?
- How did you describe it in your writing so that other people could imagine the same thing you did?
- (To classmates): Did you see that character the same way the writer did? What was different if anything?
- Who imagined their character’s day while writing the description? What was it like?
- Why did you decide on the specifics that you did for your character? For example, why did you choose a particular setting for that character’s childhood?
- Does the play provide enough clues to spark your imagination? Why or why not?
- What did you find (in your backstory or someone’s from your group) that was particularly interesting?
- How hard was it to imagine beyond the story?

EXAGGERATION and ALLITERATION IN *A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM*

This lesson will take several days.

Goal: To give students an appreciation and understanding of Shakespeare's language and comic genius

Outcomes: Students will write and perform a scene from *A Midsummer Night's Dream* as though Nick Bottom had written it.

Standards: Grades 9-12. English Comprehension & Analysis 2-2.4; Literary Response & Analysis 3-3.4; Writing Response to Literature 2.2; Speaking Applications 2.3

Vocabulary: alliteration, exaggeration, abhorred, amorous, paramour, mantle, thrum

Activity: It's Tuesday

Divide students into two groups and line up facing each other. The first student in Group A makes a boring statement about any subject. First student in Group B responds by over reacting and attaching an exaggerated emotion to the response. Then the second set of students does the same, and so on.

Example:

Group A student makes boring statement

"It's Tuesday."

Group B student overreacts and attaches an exaggerated emotion to the statement: e.g., hysteria, sadness, anger, etc.

"Oh my gosh, it's Tuesday. I'm supposed to pick up the Jonas Brothers in 10 minutes at the airport! I'm LATE! I can't believe I screwed up!"

SHAKESPEARE'S LANGUAGE

(HANDOUT BELOW)

Have class read aloud together the death scene from *Romeo and Juliet*

Teacher's note: Discuss meaning and vocabulary as needed if you haven't already studied Romeo and Juliet.

Romeo & Juliet (Act 5, scene 3)	Paraphrase
<p>Ah, dear Juliet, Why art thou yet so fair? Shall I believe That unsubstantial death is amorous, And that the lean abhorred monster keeps Thee here in dark to be his paramour? For fear of that, I still will stay with thee; And never from this palace of dim night Depart again: here, here will I remain With worms that are thy chamber-maids; O, here Will I set up my everlasting rest, And shake the yoke of inauspicious stars From this world-wearied flesh.</p> <p>Eyes, look your last! Arms, take your last embrace! and, lips, O you The doors of breath, seal with a righteous kiss A dateless bargain to engrossing death! Come, bitter conduct, come, unsavoury guide! Thou desperate pilot, now at once run on The dashing rocks thy sea-sick weary bark! Here's to my love!</p>	<p><i>Dear Juliet</i> <i>You are still beautiful</i> <i>Is death in love with you?</i> <i>Is death a dreaded monster who keeps you in</i> <i>this dark tomb to be his lover?</i> <i>I fear that, so I'll never leave you but stay here</i> <i>with the worms that are your servants</i> <i>I'll die here and get rid of the world's bad luck</i> <i>that has burdened my tired body</i></p> <p><i>Eyes, look at Juliet one last time</i> <i>Arms, hug her one last time</i> <i>Lips, who are the doors of life's breath, seal my</i> <i>bargain with death with an honorable kiss.</i> <i>Come death, you nasty guide</i> <i>You desperate pilot who has grounded your tired</i> <i>ship on the rocks</i> <i>Here's to my love</i></p>

Then read aloud together the *Pyramus and Thisbe* scene (Act 5, scene 1) in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*

Teacher's Note: Have students use exaggeration and overreaction when reading as they did in the "It's Tuesday" exercise.

Sweet Moon, I thank thee for thy sunny beams.
 I thank thee, Moon, for shining now so bright.
 For by thy gracious, golden, glittering gleams,
 I trust to take of truest Thisbe sight.—
 But stay, O spite!
 But mark, poor knight,
 What dreadful dole is here!
 Eyes, do you see?
 How can it be?
 O dainty duck! O dear!
 Thy mantle good,
 What, stained with blood?
 Approach, ye Furies fell!
 O Fates, come, come,
 Cut thread and thrum.
 Quail, crush, conclude, and quell!

Discussion

- What is the difference between the two death scenes?
- What do you notice about the language?
- Why do you think Shakespeare wrote the two scenes in such a different way?
- What is alliteration?
- What else makes the *Pyramus* scene so funny?
- What is a malapropism?
- How does Nick Bottom improperly use big vocabulary words?

Performance

- Divide class into groups
- Each group is to pick a “straight” scene from the play and rewrite it as Nick Bottom would write it for his play.
- Each group performs their scene

Rubric for Writing and Performance:

- New scene must include alliteration, exaggeration
- Added plus, if you include overly ambitious vocabulary and malapropisms
- Each group member must participate
- Performance must be loud enough to be heard

Teacher's Note: You may want to assign scenes. For example:

- Titania and Oberon discuss the changeling boy (II.i.120).
- Helena's “Love looks not with the eyes, but with the mind” (love is blind) speech (I.i.234).
- Hermia and Lysander discuss the difficulties that must be faced by those who are in love: “The course of true love never did run smooth” (I.i.134).
- Hermia talks to Demetrius saying Lysander would never have left her in the woods, so Demetrius must have killed him (III.ii.45).

Reflection

- What did you particularly enjoy about this performance?
- What, if anything, might you change to make it better?

CAL SHAKES HANDOUT

DEATH SCENE FROM *ROMEO AND JULIET*

By William Shakespeare

Ah, dear Juliet,
Why art thou yet so fair? Shall I believe
That unsubstantial death is amorous,
And that the lean abhorred monster keeps
Thee here in dark to be his paramour?
For fear of that, I still will stay with thee;
And never from this palace of dim night
Depart again: here, here will I remain
With worms that are thy chamber-maids; O, here
Will I set up my everlasting rest,
And shake the yoke of inauspicious stars
From this world-wearied flesh. Eyes, look your last!
Arms, take your last embrace! and, lips, O you
The doors of breath, seal with a righteous kiss
A dateless bargain to engrossing death!
Come, bitter conduct, come, unsavoury guide!
Thou desperate pilot, now at once run on
The dashing rocks thy sea-sick weary bark!
Here's to my love!

CAL SHAKES HANDOUT

DEATH SCENE FROM *A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM*

By William Shakespeare as though written by Nick Bottom, a Weaver

Sweet Moon, I thank thee for thy sunny beams.
I thank thee, Moon, for shining now so bright.
For by thy gracious, golden, glittering gleams,
I trust to take of truest Thisbe sight.–
But stay, O spite!
But mark, poor knight,
What dreadful dole is here!
Eyes, do you see?
How can it be?
O dainty duck! O dear!
Thy mantle good,
What, stained with blood?
Approach, ye Furies fell!
O Fates, come, come,
Cut thread and thrum.
Quail, crush, conclude, and quell!

BRUSH UP YOUR SHAKESPEARE – Reference Sheet

Below are some commonly used, but unfamiliar, Shakespearean words.

<p><i>addition</i> - title <i>affined</i> - bound by duty <i>alarum</i> - call to arms with trumpets <i>anatomize</i> - to analyze in detail <i>ancient</i> - ensign <i>anon</i> - until later <i>arrant</i> - absolute <i>aroint</i> - begone <i>assail</i> - to make amorous siege <i>attend</i> - to await <i>aye</i> - yes <i>baffle</i> - to hang up (a person) by the heels as a mark of disgrace <i>baggage</i> - strumpet, prostitute <i>balk</i> - to disregard <i>barm</i> - the froth on ale <i>belike</i> - maybe <i>belov'd</i> – beloved <i>blank</i> - a target <i>bolted</i> - refined <i>brach</i> - bitch hound <i>brake</i> - bushes <i>brave</i> - fine, handsome <i>bum</i> - backside, buttocks <i>caitiff</i> - a wretched humble person <i>catch</i> - song <i>character</i> - handwriting <i>Cousin</i> ,'coz- relative, good friend <i>chuck</i> - term of endearment, chick <i>clout</i> - a piece of white cloth</p>	<p><i>cog</i> - to deceive <i>coil</i> - trouble <i>cousin</i> - any close relative <i>descant</i> - improvise <i>discourses</i> - speaks <i>dispatch</i> - to hurry <i>e'en</i> - evening <i>enow</i> - enough <i>fare-thee-well</i> -goodbye <i>fie</i> - a curse <i>fustian</i> - wretched <i>got</i> - begot <i>grammarcy</i> - thank you <i>halter</i> - noose <i>honest</i> - chaste, pure <i>heavy</i> - sorrowful <i>housewife</i> - hussy, prostitute <i>impeach</i> - dishonor <i>list</i> - listen <i>mayhap</i> - maybe <i>mess</i> - meal, food <i>mew</i> - confine <i>minister</i> - servant <i>moiety</i> - portion <i>morrow</i> - day <i>nay</i> - no <i>ne'er</i> - never <i>office</i> - service or favor <i>oft</i> - often <i>passing</i> - surprisingly, exceedingly <i>perchance</i> - maybe</p>	<p><i>perforce</i> - must <i>politician</i> - schemer <i>post</i> - messenger <i>power</i> - army <i>prithee</i> - please <i>quest</i> - a jury <i>recreant</i> - coward <i>resolve</i> - to answer; reply to <i>but soft</i> - be quiet <i>soundly</i> - plainly <i>stale</i> - harlot <i>subscription</i> - loyalty, allegiance <i>tax</i> - to criticize; to accuse <i>troth</i> - belief <i>teem</i> - to give birth <i>thee</i> - you (informal) <i>thou</i> - you (informal) <i>thy</i> - your (informal) <i>tucket</i> - trumpet flourish <i>verge</i> - edge, circumference <i>verily</i> - truly <i>villain</i> - common person, not noble <i>want</i> - lack of, don't have <i>well-a-day</i> - alas <i>wherefore</i> - why <i>yea</i> - yes <i>zounds</i> - by his (Christ's) wounds</p>
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YOU'RE THE CRITIC: CAL SHAKES PLAY CRITIQUE

(Elementary and Middle School)

NAME: _____

1. 1. Circle the number of stars that best matches how you'd rate this performance. (One star is the lowest rating and five stars is the best rating.) Then write a paragraph on the back of the paper that specifically describes why you gave it that rating. Do not simply say "I didn't like it," but say why. For example, "I didn't like the fact that the director changed the setting to New York" or "I loved the way the actors made me believe that they were really going to kill each other."



2. Outline the main actions that happened in the plot (what were the big events in the story?).

- a.
- b.
- c.
- d.
- e.
- f.

3. What is the central idea or theme of the play?

4. Describe what the actors did to help you understand the Shakespearean language.

5. What did you particularly like or dislike about the staging (set design, lights, costumes, music, etc.)?

6. Shakespeare writes about things that we all experience: Love, jealousy, death, anger, revenge, etc. Write a paragraph (on the back) about one emotion in the play that relates to your own life at the moment.

YOU'RE THE CRITIC: CAL SHAKES PLAY CRITIQUE

(Middle and High School)

Give this production a rating of 1 to 5 stars. (One star is the lowest rating and five stars is the highest.) On a separate sheet of paper, write a paragraph review of the play. In other words, describe why you gave it that rating. Give specific examples to support your reasons. On the same sheet of paper, reflect on the following questions:



1. How would you describe the character of Puck?
2. How would you describe the actions people take in the name of love in the play?
3. Which character did you sympathize with most? Why?
4. Think about and describe:
 - i. the vocal and physical actions of the actors (characterization)
 - ii. the set
 - iii. the costumes
5. What do you think are some of the themes of the play?
6. Did the elements of characterizations, set, and/or costumes reinforce any of these themes?
7. Shakespeare writes about things that we all experience: Love, jealousy, death, anger, revenge, passion, misunderstandings, etc. Write a paragraph about one emotion in the play that relates to your own life at the moment.

Now, imagine you are the director of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, and use a new sheet of paper to create your new production.

- Cast the characters of Helena, Hermia, Lysander, Demetrius, Puck, Oberon, Titania, and Nick Bottom with famous actors.
- Would you set the play in a Renaissance time period or in a more modern time, as in the Cal Shakes production? What other setting could you place the play in that would make sense? Why?
- How about costumes? Imagine how the characters in your new production would be dressed that would illustrate the kinds of characters they are and what setting you have put the play in.